

Claims:

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1. A ~~pet treat comprising a sealed container; and one or more pieces of a formulated food product in the container, each piece comprising a fried body of a thermally gelled matrix containing protein and starch and having a moisture content of at least about 25% by weight.~~
- 10 2. A pet treat according to claim 1 which has a moisture content of above about 30% by weight.
- 15 3. A pet treat according to claim 1 in which the fried body of each piece comprises layers of a thermally gelled matrix containing the protein and the starch.
- 20 4. A ~~pet treat according to any one of claims 1 to 3 including a preservative.~~
- 25 5. A ~~retorted, pet treat comprising a retortable, sealed container; and one or more pieces of a formulated food product in the container, each piece comprising a fried body of a thermally gelled matrix containing protein and starch and having a moisture content of above about 30% by weight.~~
- 30 6. A pet treat according to claim 5 which has a moisture content of about 35% to about 50% by weight.
- 35 7. A ~~pet treat according to claim 5 or claim 6 in which the fried body of each piece comprises layers of a thermally gelled matrix containing the protein and the starch.~~
8. A ~~pet treat comprising a sealed container and one or more pieces of a formulated food product and a preservative in the container, each piece comprising a fried body of a thermally gelled matrix containing protein and starch and having a moisture content of at least about 25% by weight.~~

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9. A pet treat according to claim 8 which has a moisture content in the range from 25% to 35% by weight.

10. A pet treat according to claim 8 or claim 9 in which the fried body of each piece comprises layers of a thermally gelled matrix containing the protein and the starch.

11. A pet treat according to any one of claims 8 to 10 wherein each piece has a pH in the range from 4.5 to 5.2.

12. A process for producing a fried pet treat product, the process comprising: thermally gelling a protein source and a starch source for providing a thermally gelled matrix; forming the thermally gelled matrix into pieces; frying the pieces for providing fried pieces and reducing the moisture content of the pieces to no less than 25% moisture by weight; filling the pieces into a container; and sealing the container.

13. A process according to claim 12 comprising forming the thermally gelled matrix into a layered, gelled matrix prior to forming the matrix into pieces.

14. A process according to claim 12 or claim 13 including the step of introducing a preservative into the container.

15. A process according to any one of claims 12 to 14 including reducing the pH of the pieces to the range from 4.5 to 5.2.

16. A process according to any one of claims 12 to 15 wherein the step of frying is flash frying.

17. A process according to any one of claims 12 to 16 wherein the container is a sealable pouch.

18. A process for producing a retorted pet treat, the process comprising:

thermally gelling a protein source and a starch source for providing a thermally gelled matrix;
forming the thermally gelled matrix into pieces;
flash frying the pieces for providing fried pieces; and
filling the pieces into a retortable container and retorting the container.

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19. A process according to claim 18 further comprising forming the thermally gelled matrix into a layered, gelled matrix prior to forming the matrix into pieces.

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20. A process according to claim 18 or claim 19 in which the thermally gelled matrix is formed into the layered, gelled matrix by heating the protein source and the starch source using mechanical energy in an emulsion mill and ejecting the heated mixture from the emulsion mill into a holding tube.

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21. A process according to any one of claims 18 to 20 in which the pieces have a moisture content of about 50% to about 65% by weight prior to frying.

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22. A process according to any one of claims 18 to 21 in which the fried pieces have a moisture content of about 35% to about 50% by weight.

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23. A process according to any one of claims 18 to 22 further comprising filling moisture into the retortable container with the fried pieces, sufficient moisture being provided to raise the moisture content of the fried pieces to that of the pieces prior to frying.

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24. A retorted, pet treat comprising a retortable, sealed container and one or more pieces of a formulated food product in the container, each piece comprising a fried body of a thermally gelled matrix, the pet treat being produced by a process comprising:
thermally gelling a protein source and a starch source for providing a thermally gelled matrix;
forming the thermally gelled matrix into pieces;
flash frying the pieces for providing fried pieces; and
filling the pieces into a retortable container and retorting the container.

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25. A pet treat according to claim 24 which has a moisture content of at least about 25% by weight.

26. A pet treat according to claim 25 which has a moisture content of about 5 35% to about 50% by weight.

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